

- (1) Contain between one to four critical elements that address individual job performance on major functional activities/responsibilities, important mission objectives/goals or key programmatic accomplishments.
- (2) Contain one critical element that addresses a series of attributes that each employee should demonstrate, including: Responsibility and Accountability, Communication, Innovation/Quality Improvements, Teamwork, and Customer Service (see attachment for a description of these Attributes).
- (3) Assign a weight to each critical element for use in deriving summary performance rating levels and for determining the amount of performance-based awards.
- (4) Utilize the following performance rating levels in assessing the level of performance on each critical element as well as determining the overall assigned summary rating level: Significantly Exceeds Expectations (SE), Meets Expectations (ME), Needs Improvement (NI), and Fails to Meet Expectations (FME). This rating pattern corresponds to pattern F of the requirements of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, section 430.208;
- (5) Define performance standards at the Meets Expectations level for all critical elements; and
- (6) Be established (signed and dated by the employee and Rating Official) within 30 days following the beginning of: (1) the annual appraisal period; (2) any work assignment expected to exceed 120 days (e.g., temporary promotion, detail, etc.); or (3) appointment or permanent assignment to a new position more than 90 days in advance of the end of the appraisal period.

b. Performance Rating Level Definitions:

The following performance rating definitions are used both as summary performance ratings to convey overall performance as well as to convey a performance rating level on an individual critical element.

- (1) Significantly Exceeds Expectations (SE) – the highest level of performance -- performance at this level is dramatically higher than that typically described at the Meets Expectations level in terms of work-products and/or results. This type of performance is characterized by such outcomes as extremely high cost-savings or cost avoidances and/or extremely high levels of efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness.
- (2) Meets Expectations (ME) – the prescribed level of expected overall performance -- performance standards for all critical elements are defined at this level.

- (3) Needs Improvement (NI) – the level of overall performance that falls short of prescribed performance expectations. Performance at this level is clearly lower than that prescribed at the ME level in terms of work-products and/or results, but above unacceptable and requires supervisory intervention to assist the employee in meeting prescribed levels of performance. Although a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is not required, it is recommended that the supervisor prepare a Performance Counseling memorandum that focuses on: a) the critical elements upon which performance needs to improve and the corresponding performance standards, b) work expectations, and c) what the employee must do in order to meet performance expectations on such critical elements.
- (4) **Fails to Meet Expectations (FME)** – the lowest level of overall performance. Performance at this level is clearly unacceptable and triggers formal corrective action. If, after being covered by a performance appraisal plan for at least 90 calendar days, the employee fails to meet performance in one or more critical elements, then he/she will be formally placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP focuses on each critical performance element upon which the employee fails to meet expectations; provides a reasonable amount of time for improvement, normally 90 days; specifies what must be done to bring performance up to the ME level; and explains the consequences of continued failure. The PIP will explain what the employee must do to improve the unacceptable performance during the PIP period, and will indicate a meeting time and date to discuss the on-going performance. At the end of the PIP period, the supervisor will complete a rating of record addressing the employee's performance during this period.

An employee who is afforded an opportunity to improve, but continues to perform at a “Fails to Meet Expectations” level at the end of that period, may be reduced in grade or removed from employment.

c. Assigning Weights to Critical Elements:

- (1) The total weight assigned to all critical elements must equal 100 and only whole numbers may be used in assigning weights.
- (2) Critical elements are assigned weights in order to convey distinctions in the importance of key job responsibilities. The collective weight assigned to these critical elements must total 90.
- (3) The critical element for Employee Attributes is assigned a fixed weight of 10.
- (4) A weight shall be assigned to each job performance critical element by the rating official with input from the employee. The minimum weight for any critical element under (2) above must be at least 10 and expressed as a whole number. Note that it is not necessary to assign equal weights to all critical elements. Examples of factors to be considered in the assignment